

7. LONGTAILED DUCK OR OLD SQUAW *CLANGULA HYEMALIS* (LINN.)
IN DEHRA DUN, UTTAR PRADESH

On 19 January 1991 we were conducting a waterfowl census on the Asan reservoir some 40 km west of Dehra Dun city. The reservoir is fed by Yamuna hydel canal and Asan river and occupies an area of approximately 25 ha. with maximum depth of about 10 m. The reservoir is surrounded by high hills; on the north and west by the Himachal Himalaya with altitudes up to 2000 m, and in the south by the Uttar Pradesh Shiwaliks with altitudes up to 1000 m.

Amidst a mixed flock of mallards *Anas platyrhynchos* and gadwalls *Anas strepera* in the shallow end of the lake was a brown-black and white duck. It had a pointed tail of two elongated central tail feathers kept slightly inclined upwards. The bill was short, with a rose pink terminal half and a dark basal half. It had a dark patch below the ear coverts, a dark brown back and collar broadening into a band on the breast. It did not take us long to identify the duck as the longtailed duck or old squaw *Clangula hyemalis*.

The duck soon took off and after circling around twice, settled on the deeper end of the lake. Here it dived into the water many times, staying inside for 5 to 10 seconds each time. Later it joined

a 500 strong mixed flock of redcrested, common and tufted pochards (*Netta rufina*, *Aythya ferina* and *Aythya fuligula* respectively) and two great crested grebes *Podiceps cristatus*. It tucked its bill into its wings and rested after that.

The next day, the duck was spotted again at the same location by B.C. Chowdhury, N.H. Kakodkar and others, from the Wildlife Institute of India.

The longtailed duck has been recorded only five times in the Indian subcontinent – Pakistan (Baluchistan 1933, 1938; Sind 1936), Kashmir (Hokarsar 1939) and north-east Assam (Sadiya Frontier tract, 1935) (HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN, Ali, S. and Ripley, S.D. 1983). Hence the present sighting constitutes a record in the Indian subcontinent after a gap of more than 50 years. Moreover, the earlier records were made in the border areas of the subcontinent. Dehra Dun being well inside the Indian mainland, the present sighting has special significance.

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8. EASTERN STEPPE EAGLE *AQUILA RAPAX NIPALENSIS* HODGSON
KILLING MOBbing BRAHMINY KITE *HALIASTUR INDUS* (BODDAERT)
AT PT. CALIMERE WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, TAMIL NADU

Mobbing in birds mostly involves the noisy, massed attack on a predator by a number of smaller birds. Crows and jays often attack hawks or owls. According to Welty (1982) mobbing is an adaptive response to predation.

The eastern steppe eagle *Aquila rapax nipalensis* has been reported as a vagrant at Point Calimere Wildlife Sanctuary, Tamil Nadu (Natarajan *et al.* 1990). On 27 November 1988 two brahminy kites *Haliastur indus* were observed chasing (mobbing) a steppe eagle. The eagle ducked thrice but the attack by the brahminy kites became intense. At that juncture the steppe eagle flew up and away from the brahminy kites, then swooped down on one of them, which finally fell to the ground. Immediately, the steppe eagle glided down, picked up the kite and went under cover. However,

it left the kite on the ground and flew off when it was disturbed by one of us. The kite was dead. The next day, the same eagle was mobbed by a brahminy kite, which this time was attacked in the air and fell to the ground. We caught the brahminy kite, and noticed that the right wing was broken.

The killing of mobbing carrion crows *Corvus corone* by the golden eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* has been reported earlier (Walker 1983). This observation of the killing of mobbing brahminy kites by the steppe eagle is a new record.

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